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MONDAY, JULY 5, 1909.

THE MERIT OF THE CORPORATION TAX.

There is little room to be said about the corporation tax except that it recognizes the principle of getting revenue out of incomes. Thus it may prove the opening wedge which will accomplish something far better some day. It was undoubtedly on this basis that the majority of the Democrats in the Senate voted for it. The final vote, which carried the corporation tax into the bill, was largely a formal one. The alternatives had been lost, and the Democrats accepted the Taft amendment, not in preference to the Bailey-Cummings general income tax amendment—which they all favored—but under pressure of the knowledge that it was either that or nothing. To have defeated it would have meant to restrict revenues derivable under the bill to customs taxes alone.

Newspapers which are regarded as especially friendly to corporate interests are indignantly declaring that the Taft tax has been bagged from the Denver platform. This is only half a truth. The Denver declaration for a tax on corporate incomes was closely knit with a demand for a tax on individual incomes, and there is no reason to believe that the "Bryan Democracy" favored the singling out of corporations for special taxation. The evidence is quite otherwise. The fundamental idea about this tax is wholly undemocratic. It is manifestly discriminatory. There are other serious objections to it. It lodges with the government a power of optional publicity which may prove most oppressive in unworthy hands. It penalizes honesty and puts a premium on crooked dealing and perjury. It falls in many cases upon those whom a just and wise special tax would purposely avoid, and avoids those upon whom a just and wise special tax would purposely fall.

About such a tax it is difficult to speak in terms of praise. The chief merit that its sponsor in the Senate found in it was that it would beat the income tax. The chief merit that Democrats in the Senate can find in it is that it may pave the way to the income tax. It is a bad thing in itself, but it may prove a good stepping-stone.

PROSPECTIVE LEGISLATORS' PLATFORM.

The State begins to evince a commendable interest in the platforms and policies of the legislative candidates. In the hands of the successful ones will lie the shaping of Virginia's constructive statesmanship next year, the Governor-to-be apparently having ambitions in that direction. These gentlemen will all come up for election before a great while, and the people should demand of them what measures they will advocate in the next Assembly. If they decline to promise anything definite and progressive, it is the people's privilege to choose some one else; and if we may judge from the present tone of the State press, this is exactly what they will do.

If the various questions will secure from their representatives answers to a number of uniform questions, they can be assured that enough men will be returned to the next Legislature to carry through some of the necessary reforms. General pledges will amount to very little. Better schools and better roads are new matters of course, and promises in these directions are not sufficient guarantees of legislative capacity. The candidates should be called upon to answer definite and pointed inquiries on never and less settled lines.

For example, there is the question of tax reform. The term is so broad as to mean a great deal or practically nothing. The Democrats in the counties should require of their candidates a specific statement of the reforms which they favor in our tax system. Shall there be a uniform assessment of lands and personal property? Shall there be a tax commission with powers to equalize assessments? Shall the tax on bank deposits and the bonds of Virginia railroads be removed? Shall the mortgage tax be modified? If the candidates are planned down to specific answers to such questions as these, valuable changes in the tax code can certainly be secured.

Better and fairer taxation is, of course, only one of a number of reforms which are needed. Many other matters of importance await the attention of the next Legislature. The evils of the fee-system have recently been pointed out in this paper. There are the grave questions of further stimulating agriculture and industry in Virginia; of population; of giving the State a sound legalized primary; of bringing the oyster industry to the prosperity which belongs to it. These are matters upon which every would-be lawmaker ought to have clear and concrete ideas. If the Democrats of the counties will adopt the policy of not electing members to the next Assembly without first making sure of

their position upon such subjects as these, the needed work of reform can be accomplished, no matter who sits in the Governor's chair.

TYPHOID FEVER AND COMMON SENSE.

The comparative rarity of typhoid fever cases in Richmond goes to show what common sense will do. In previous years the number of deaths during the first six months of the year has ranged as high as thirty, and has never been below fifteen. Yet, during 1909 there have been but five deaths from typhoid fever, and all of these occurred before March 21.

The honor for this achievement belongs to the City Board of Health, which has investigated every case of typhoid fever in the city and has studied all of them in the light of the latest sanitary knowledge. But, after all, the real success of the Health Department in this direction has been in arousing the common sense of the people and educating them in the means of preventing disease. The good health of any community depends more upon the general information of the people than upon any single force. In proportion as the health authorities are able to instruct and educate the people in the science of taking care of themselves, just so will the amount of communicable disease be reduced.

The people of the State generally stand sorely in need of this saving knowledge. There are about 10,000 cases of typhoid fever a year in Virginia, with an average mortality of not less than 10 per cent. There is no disputing the fact that this fearful death rate could be reduced by popular education and by common sense action on the part of the people. In Germany, where the propaganda has been widely circulated, typhoid fever has been practically eliminated. A case there is so unusual as to cause a sensation in a clinic.

Theoretically, there is no reason why Virginia cannot do as well as Germany. It can accomplish the same results if the people will support public health measures, and will practice in their homes the simple rules of prevention. As we understand them, there is nothing difficult or complex about the general methods of preventing typhoid fever. In the cities the matter is simple; in the country it can be accomplished if sewage is disposed of in a satisfactory manner, and if the farm well is properly protected. A few imported cases, here and there, may cause trouble; but they will not seriously affect the general decline of the disease.

Here is the field for a great victory, if the people of the State wish to achieve it. A few precautions in every community will bring better returns than investments in South African diamonds or Yukon gold.

ENGLAND'S FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES.

Our own national deficit is to-day \$89,111,156, and the general attitude of Congress does not promise the wiping out of this to-morrow. Americans may draw such consolation as they can from the thought that the English people are in much the same situation. The English Cabinet is to-day fighting a large deficit, and, incidentally, is receiving round abuse at the hands of the opposition. In the current issue of the Contemporary Review, Lord Welby states the case from the standpoint of the older statesmen who admired Gladstone's finances. He finds little that is encouraging in the next budget, and much to discourage hopes for England's financial betterment under the present regime.

Like America, England has been forced to enlarge its expenditures very greatly during the last few years, and in addition she has assumed a heavy financial burden for the payment of old age pensions. Along with this increase in disbursements there has been a very marked decline in the revenue receipts. The decline has now reached such a point that the Chancellor estimates a decrease in the revenue returns of more than £1,600,000 for the next year, although the average deficit on previous estimates has been only £180,000. To add to its other troubles, the Cabinet finds the opposition inclined to a popular policy of larger naval expenditures, and while really liberal, the Cabinet has to appear conservative before the people.

All of these things combine to make a prospective deficit of more than £1,600,000. To meet this the Cabinet proposes, with its usual exactness, to levy additional taxes, in order to close the year free of debt. The every-day necessities of the workman have been spared, but his luxuries, like tobacco and tea, have been taxed at a higher rate than at any time during the last thirty years. The income tax, it will be remembered, has been graduated to increase the return from rich men, but its point of incidence has been lowered to include the surplus earnings of workmen. The "death duties" and the "estate and legacy" duties, which correspond to our inheritance taxes, are also to be increased.

But it is not against these additional taxes that the more conservative financiers are protesting. In their judgment the Chancellor has committed an unpardonable sin in drawing £5,000,000 from the sinking fund. He has announced his purpose of retaining the taxes which supply the sinking fund, but he proposes to devote the proceeds to current expenses. In other words, he has determined to end, for some years at least, all efforts to reduce the national debt, and will take the money to build new Dreadnaughts and to pension old workmen.

All this has given John Bull an unusually gloomy air, and has drawn from the opposition reproaches and denunciations of no uncertain sound. There is something not wholly unfamiliar to American ears in the recent-

ful declarations that Parliament is made up of "robbers" and that the next taxes amount to "confiscation" and will end in "absolutism."

THE FOURTH AND THE FIFTH.

We bought our little Johnny John. Cracked the eggs. We bought a pretty cannon. For he liked to hear it roar. We love our little Johnny. And could nothing him deny. That would give the darling pleasure. On this great day in July.

We bought fireworks and serpents. We bought dynamite and railors. Devil chasers by the dozen. And thought he would be more. He was our only laddie; We let him have full sway. The wildest liberty and noise. This patriotic day.

In the morning very early John began to celebrate. The shed was burned at seven. And the stable went at eight.

An alarm was turned at nine. And half an hour later. The house was blazing fire.

Great day it was for Johnny. A day surcharged with fun. A day that he never forgot. He saw the firemen run. The dynamited cannon. Burst with a muffled roar. And sent the sparks of fire. We gleamed half after four.

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